

Message Text

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ACTION OES-04

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-10 PA-01 PRS-01 CIAE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4172

INFO USIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 5251

USIA FOR IEU/MCLAUGHLIN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: TSPA

SUBJECT: U.S. ASTRONAUT AT IFA CONGRESS

REF: THOMAS-KELLY SEPT 8 TELCON

1. ORGANIZING COMMITTEE OF IFA ASKED EMBASSY IF U.S. ASTRONAUT
WOULD ATTEND BIENNIAL CONGRESS TO BE HELD LISBON SEPTEMBER 21-27,
1975.

2. WE HAVE CAREFULLY CONSIDERED PROS AND CONS OF SUCH A VISIT
AND SEE THE FOLLOWING:

PRO: (A) CONGRESS IS PRESTIGIOUS, HIGH-LEVEL, APOLITICAL,
AND INVOLVES UP TO TWO THOUSAND ACADEMIC, SCIENTIFIC, AND
INTELLECTUAL DELEGATES FROM OVER FORTY COUNTRIES.

(B) PSYCHOLOGICAL ADVANTAGE OF U.S. PRESENCE, AT
ASTRONAUT LEVEL, IS UNBEATABLE. MOONWALKER CERNAN SPEECH
AT 1973 CONGRESS WAS CONSIDERED BY MANY U.S. GOVERNMENT
OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE AS THE MOST PRODUCTIVE AND REWARDING
PUBLIC RELATIONS EFFORT.

(C) CHARGES OF U.S. BOYCOTT OR DOWNPLAYING OF
LISBON IFA COMMITTEE'S EFFORTS WOULD BE AVOIDED. PRESIDENT
COSTA GOMES IS SCHEDULED TO INAUGURATE CONGRESS.

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(D) MOST IMPORTANTLY, A STRONG U.S. PRESENCE

WOULD HEARTEN THE MODERATES IN PORTUGAL.

CON: PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS BY SOVIET EMBASSY HERE TO
USE APOLLO-SOYUZ SPACE FLIGHT AS MEANS OF BUILDING PCP
LEGITIMACY AND USSR IMAGE ARE LIKELY TO BE REPEATED WITH A
VENGEANCE AT CONGRESS. IF SOVIETS SEND COSMONAUT, WE WOULD
EXPECT STRENUOUS AND HARD TO RESIST EFFORT BY SOVIETS TO PUSH
THE FRIENDLY "COMRADE IN ARMS" IDEA WITH AS MUCH
PAIRING OF THE TWO SPACEMEN AS POSSIBLE.

3. RECOMMENDATION: IN VIEW OF THE DELICATE POLITICAL
BALANCE HERE AND THE DECLINING POLITICAL WEIGHT OF THE PCP,
WE BELIEVE THAT DANGER OF COMMUNISTS TAKING ADVANTAGE OF
PRESENCE OF U.S. ASTRONAUT OUTWEIGH BENEFITS. EMBASSY
RECOMMENDS AGAINST SENDING AN ASTRONAUT.
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